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ABSTRACT

This paper provides information regarding the particular factors that influence the work of urban school counselors, reviews the school counseling training standards set forth by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), and explores the additional training needs of urban school counselors. Student diversity, a lack of resources, poverty, family issues, violence, and high drop-out rates characterize counseling concerns in urban schools. Urban school counseling programs must include studies that provide students with an understanding of the coordination of counseling to the total school community, and the leadership skills needed to initiate collaborative efforts with other school personnel, outside agencies, and businesses. Urban counselors must have skills in family development and family intervention, dealing with violence, and career counseling. Despite the usefulness of CACREP standards in preparing school counselors, counselor educators should begin exploring and discussing the flexibility of the standards so that urban school counselor training needs are addressed. Counselor educators who work in programs that can be characterized as predominately urban must develop and implement preparation models that can account for the unique relationships and circumstances found in urban schools. Suggestions for training urban school counselors are given. (EMK)

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Running head: SCHOOL COUNSELOR PREPARATION

School Counselor Preparation in Urban Settings

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School Counselor Preparation in Urban Settings

Abstract

This article includes a discussion of particular factors (e.g., poverty, lack of resources) that influence the work of urban school counselors. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) training standards for school counselors are reviewed. And lastly, suggestions for training urban school counselors are given.

School Counselor Preparation in Urban Settings

Although there has been literature written about school counseling in rural areas (Allen & James, 1990; Lee, 1984; Saba, 1991), very little has been written about urban school counseling. As noted in the literature, urban educators have distinct obstacles that are distinguishable from those of their suburban counterparts (Bombaugh, 1995; Haberman & Rickards, 1990; Hughes & Clark, 1981). Large numbers of poor and disadvantaged students, run-down buildings, poor attendance, illiteracy, high dropout rates, violence, and hopelessness are the overwhelming reality of urban schools (Council of the Great City Schools, 1987; Miller, 1992; Oakes, 1987; Repetto, 1990). Clearly, these issues must be considered and addressed in structuring successful urban school counseling training programs.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is three-fold: one, to provide information regarding the particular factors that influence the work of urban school counselors; two, to review the school counseling training standards set forth by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and three, to explore the additional training needs of urban school counselors. The author does not propose to change the CACREP standards but to begin exploring and discussing the flexibility of the standards so that urban school counselor training needs are addressed.

For the purpose of this article, the terms "urban" and "city" are used to describe any large and relatively dense concentration of population where the inhabitants are engaged primarily in nonagricultural occupations (Academic American Encyclopedia, 1990). The density of people differentiates urban communities from suburban and rural communities. For instance, New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago each have populations that exceed two million people (U. S. Census Bureau, 1995). Metropolitan areas that include major cities (e.g., Washington, DC-MD-VA, Miami-Fort Lauderdale) consist of populations ranging from three to 19 million (U. S. Census Bureau, 1995). The magnitude of people in these areas make urban living distinctive and unique.

Factors that Influence Urban School Counseling

The following factors-- diversity of students, lack of resources, poverty, family issues, violence, and high drop-out rates-- significantly impact counseling in urban schools.

Diversity of Students

In major cities, students from ethnic minority groups comprise the highest percentage of public school enrollments (Hacker, 1992). Urban

schools may be culturally diverse or they may be homogeneous--consisting of predominately Black and Latino students (King & Bey, 1995). Also, at the present time the rates of immigration are the largest in U.S. history and major cities encounter the largest influx of immigrants (U. S. Department of Justice, 1994). Between 2.1 and 2.7 million immigrant children are presently in the U.S. and most of these children and their families tend to have limited support systems (Kopala, Esquivel & Baptiste, 1994). Numerous urban school districts have incorporated special incentives to recruit bilingual counselors because of the increasing number of non-English speaking students (G. Elizalde-Utnick, personal communication, September 4, 1997).

Lack of Resources

Inadequate resources is characteristic of urban schools (Kozol, 1991). Dilapidated and substandard facilities (Miller, 1992), difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers (Natriello & Zumwalt, 1993), high levels of teacher stress (Freiberg, Zbikowski, & Ganser, 1994), and an overwhelming need for highly trained and specialized professionals (Stallings, 1992) are indicative of urban school environments. According to Colbert and Wolff (1993), "some inner schools have a teacher turnover rate as high as 50% and a paucity of certified teachers willing to fill their vacancies, especially in math, science, and bilingual education." In New

York City, for instance, 57% of the new teachers in 1992 were unlicensed and students had a 50% chance of being taught by a licensed science or math teacher. As a result of the lack of trained and experienced teachers, urban school counselors regularly serve as teacher consultants or better yet, teacher trainers. In addition, when teachers lack experience and training in classroom management skills, the rate of student behavioral concerns rise which consequently result in increased counselor referrals.

Poverty

Urban schools experience challenges related to such societal ills as poverty and unemployment. High rates of unemployment in urban areas and the inequitable number of unemployed ethnic minorities is well-documented (Wilson, 1987; Winters, 1993). With urban housing costs accelerating three times faster than incomes, parents in urban settings range from those unable to provide adequate shelter, food, and clothing for their offspring to the working poor, who hold two to three jobs and still are unable to make ends meet. In addition, urban youth and particularly ethnic minority youth experience higher unemployment rates than their nonurban counterparts (Repetto, 1990). Consequently, urban school counselors have become increasingly interested in new and innovative school-to-work programs, career development activities that are culturally appropriate, and job

preparation skills.

Family Issues

Urban areas are evidencing increases in single parent families, teen parents, and homeless families. According to Boyd-Franklin (1989) single-parent families have become the norm, and single teenage mothers are rapidly on the rise in urban areas. In lower socioeconomic urban Black communities, the rate of teenage pregnancy is twice that of White teenagers (Children's Defense Fund, 1988). The National School Boards Association (1989) found that most urban school districts have ongoing programs for pregnant and parenting students.

The rising poverty rate and the decrease in availability of low-income housing units has caused a tremendous increase in the number of homeless families (McChesney, 1992). Kondratas (1991) indicated that over 75% of the homeless families in the United States are of African American, Native American, or Hispanic descent. School counselors in urban settings are now encountering more students with personal, social, and academic difficulties as a result of being homeless (Daniels, 1992; Walsh & Buckley, 1994).

Violence

Although urban areas appear to be besieged by violence, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI, 1994) reported that the Crime Index

in the nation's cities has decreased. The greatest decline was recorded in cities with populations of more than one million. Nevertheless, the FBI (1994) reported that violent crime committed by urban youth is on the increase. School officials in major cities indicate that gang violence is still played out on school property and in many classrooms (Cohen, Weiss, Mulvey, & Dearwater, 1994). In a study where urban adolescents were asked if crime was a big problem in their schools, 19% of the youth perceived this to be a "very big problem" (Maguire & Pastore, 1994). As a result of the increase in violence in schools, urban school districts are instituting sophisticated security measures and holding workshops to train school personnel to respond to the threat of violence in the school. School counselors are frequently asked to develop and implement staff development activities focused on the topic of youth violence.

High Drop-Out Rates

Kaufman and Frase (1990) found that students residing in major cities were more likely to drop out than were students in nonurban schools. In many urban schools, approximately half of all students entering the ninth grade fail to graduate four years later (Gruskin, Campbell, & Paulu, 1987). As a result of the increasing number of students choosing to drop out, many school districts have formed special

departments and task forces to work with students who are at risk of dropping out (National School Board Association, 1989). In New York City, for instance, many school counselors are hired to specifically work with students at-risk of dropping out of school.

CACREP School Counseling Curricular Experiences

In the case of counselor education, CACREP is the accreditation body for master's level school counseling programs (Altekreuse & Wittmer, 1991; Sweeney, 1992). As of March 1993, only 74 of the 343 institutions offering a master's degree in school counseling were approved by CACREP (Hollis & Wantz, 1993). Hence, the majority of school counselors-- urban, suburban and rural-- are not receiving consistent training.

The CACREP standards (1994) for training school counselors consists of common core curricular experiences and additional curricular experiences and skills specifically designed for school counseling programs. These additional curricular experiences include four sections: Foundations of School Counseling, Contextual Dimensions, Knowledge and Skills for the Practice of School Counseling, and Clinical Instruction. For instance, the Foundations of School Counseling (CACREP) section consists of studies that include the following:

1. history, philosophy, and trends in school counseling;

2. role and function of the school counselor in conjunction with the roles of other professional and support personnel in the school;
3. knowledge of the school setting and curriculum;
4. ethical standards and guidelines of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA);
5. policies, laws, and legislation relevant to school counseling; and
6. implications of sociocultural, demographic, and lifestyle diversity relevant to school counseling (p. 75).

The Contextual Dimensions section of the CACREP (1994) school counseling standards consists of studies that "provide an understanding of the coordination of counseling program components as they relate to the total community (p. 75)." The Knowledge and Skills for the Practice of School Counseling section is divided into three subsections: Program Development, Implementation and Evaluation, Counseling and Guidance, and Consultation. These three subsections require studies that include individual and group counseling, group guidance approaches, developmental approaches to assist students at points of educational transition, methods of consulting with parents, teachers, and other school personnel, approaches to peer helper programs, and methods of enhancing teamwork within the school community.

The final section, Clinical Instruction requires that "students perform under the supervision of a certified school counselor, a variety of activities that a regular employed school counselor would be expected to perform (p. 76)." This direct service might include individual counseling, group work, developmental classroom guidance and consultation. Appendix includes the full text of the curricular experiences.

Urban School Counseling Training Programs

As previously stated, all school counselors benefit from the CACREP curricular experiences. Nonetheless, potential urban school counselors have special training needs. Based on these needs, counselor educators need to begin discourse regarding the flexibility of our existing standards to include the following crucial areas.

Foundations of School Counseling

Three inclusions are warranted in the Foundations of School Counseling section. Firstly, urban school counseling programs should have studies that address urban education issues and problems. No longer should school counseling training programs focus on the "traditional" school setting and curriculum; rather urban programs should study urban education and issues associated with living in a complex urban environment. Most importantly, counselors must be mindful to not confuse the terms *diverse, minority, of color, urban, or poor*

and avoid pejorative or deficit associations with these terms (King & Bey, 1995).

Secondly, urban school counseling training programs must study multicultural issues extensively. Considering the ethnic make-up of urban areas, it is imperative that school counselor trainees understand how culture impacts every aspect of their students' development. In addition, given the large numbers of immigrants in many major cities, urban school counselors should understand the acculturation process. Acculturation, the process of adapting to the rules and behavioral characteristics of another group of people, presents special challenges to immigrant persons (Altaribba, 1993; Smart & Smart, 1995). Urban school counselors greatly benefit from coursework that addresses facilitating the acculturative process of immigrant students (Kopala et al., 1994).

Thirdly, based on the high attrition rates of teachers, urban counselors must not only understand how to support teachers' professional development but also play a role in overseeing new teachers' entry and retention in the profession. Bey (1990) suggested that mentoring relationships in urban school districts are needed for teachers who may have been poorly prepared as well as to contribute to teachers' development of resilience to survive the routines and the frustrations of urban teaching.

Contextual Dimensions: School Counseling

Urban school counseling programs must include studies that provide students with an understanding of the coordination of counseling to the total school community, and the leadership skills needed to initiate collaborative efforts with other school personnel, outside agencies, and businesses. McMullan and Snyder (1987) concluded that informal and formal partnerships between urban public schools and outside agencies strengthened community interest in education and support for special programs for economically disadvantaged and academically at-risk youth.

Knowledge and Skills for the Practice of School Counseling

Because of the high incidence of teenage pregnancy, single parent families, and homeless families, it is imperative that urban school counselors receive training in the area of family development and family intervention strategies. Studies in this area should include theories of family counseling, characteristics of ethnically diverse urban families, and the skills necessary to develop home-school collaboration programs. Winters (1993) concluded that schools in disadvantaged urban areas need to "tap' the potential and resources of their students' parents. Urban counselors are in an ideal position to lead the mission of involving parents in the education of their children. With the exception of Head Start programs, most educational programs do not focus on

maximizing opportunities for the development of families and children. Recently however, numerous inner-city schools have developed parent involvement programs (e.g., Comer, 1986; Marriott, 1990). Also, many Federal and local programs focused on the achievement of urban and disadvantaged students mandate that a parent involvement component be included (Yates, 1993). Simply put, urban counselors must have the skills and knowledge to develop programs that support and encourage families to participate in the education of their children.

In addition to family intervention skills, urban counselors must have the skills to counsel and assist youngsters with possible emotional disorders and dysfunctional behavior. The increasing violence and aggressive behavior among adolescents has presented a challenge for urban educators. Urban counselors must have the skills to work with troubled youth and also to provide treatment and prevention for these youngsters. In response to the dramatically increased level of urban violence, urban school counselors are being asked to organize and participate on Crisis Response Teams. Seltzer (1992) reported that crisis teams are critical for urban children following traumatic incidents in their schools or in their communities. Specific techniques in crisis team development should be provided within urban school counseling training programs.

Urban school counseling programs must also provide studies that

include innovative approaches to assist students and parents make career decisions. Considering the high unemployment rates of ethnic minority youth, urban counselors need the skills and knowledge to address the career development of ethnically diverse students. In general, traditional career theories have ignored the realities of lower socioeconomic populations, particularly those of urban Black communities (Merrick, 1995). Critics of traditional career theories have challenged the assumptions that there exists a free and open labor market and that people have an array of choices about their career (Smith, 1983; Warnath, 1975). Warnath (1975) suggests that these theories ignore the high unemployment rates of minority individuals as well as the impact of discrimination. For this reason, urban counselors need to study untraditional theories of career development and avoid the societal view of individuals whose lives are challenged by poverty, and see the strengths and career potential of all their students.

Clinical Instruction

In order for the internship to be effective, urban counselor training programs must provide practica and internship experiences in urban schools that have effective school counselors. Counselor trainees will benefit from observing the implementation of comprehensive guidance programs by experienced urban school counselors. Given the

large numbers of students in urban schools, counselor trainees particularly need to learn how to effectively maximize their time with students. Urban counselor training programs must provide counseling supervisors with expertise in urban school counseling. Supervisors must provide a supportive environment in which the trainee can feel free to acknowledge successes and failures, to risk, and to struggle with the complex nature of inner-city youth.

Conclusion

The urban school counselor differs from that of his or her rural and suburban counterparts. Despite the usefulness of the CACREP standards in preparing all school counselors, counselor educators should begin to discuss the ability of the CACREP standards to address urban school counselor training needs. In addition, counselor educators working in programs that can be characterized as predominately urban, need to develop and implement preparation models that can account for the unique relationships and circumstances found in urban schools.

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Appendix

CACREP Curricular Experiences For School Counseling Programs

In addition to the common core curricular experiences found in Section II.J, curricular experiences and demonstrated knowledge and skill in each of the areas below are required of all students in the program.

A. FOUNDATIONS OF SCHOOL COUNSELING

Studies in this area include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. history, philosophy, and trends in school counseling;
2. role and function of the school counselor in conjunction with the roles of other professional and support personnel in the school;
3. knowledge of the school setting and curriculum;
4. ethical standards and guidelines of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA);
5. policies, laws, and legislation relevant to school counseling; and
6. implications of sociocultural, demographic, and lifestyle diversity relevant to school counseling.

B. CONTEXTUAL DIMENSIONS: SCHOOL COUNSELING

Studies that provide an understanding of the coordination of counseling program components as they relate to the total school

community include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. referral of children and adolescents for specialized help;
2. coordination efforts with resource persons, specialists, businesses, and agencies outside the school to promote program objectives;
3. methods of integration of guidance curriculum in the total school curriculum;
4. promotion of the use of counseling and guidance activities and programs by the total school community to enhance a positive school climate; and
5. methods of planning and presenting guidance-related educational programs for school personnel and parents.

C. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR THE PRACTICE OF SCHOOL COUNSELING

1. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION

Studies in this area include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. use of surveys, interviews, and needs assessment;
b. design, implementation, and evaluation of a comprehensive, developmental school program;
c. implementation and evaluation of specific strategies

designed to meet program goals and objectives; and

d. preparation of a counseling schedule reflecting appropriate time commitments and priorities in a developmental school counseling program.

2. COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE

Studies in this area include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. individual and group counseling and guidance approaches appropriate for the developmental stage and needs of children and adolescents;

b. group guidance approaches that are systematically designed to assist children and adolescents with developmental tasks;

c. approaches to peer helper programs;

d. issues which may affect the development and functioning of children and adolescents (e.g., abuse, eating disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder); and

e. developmental approaches to assist students and parents at points of educational transition (e.g., postsecondary education, vocational, and career options).

3. CONSULTATION

Studies in this area include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. methods of enhancing teamwork within the school community; and

b. methods of consulting with parents, teachers, administrators, support staff, and community agency personnel.

D. CLINICAL INSTRUCTION

For the School Counseling program, the 600 clock hour internship (Standard III.I) requires that the student perform, under supervision of a certified school counselor, a variety of activities that a regularly employed school counselor would be expected to perform. The internship experience is to take place in a school setting. The requirement of 240 clock hours of direct service includes, but is not limited to, individual counseling, group work, developmental classroom guidance, and consultation.